

Message Text

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42

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7101

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USUN NEW YORK 0218

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0577

DEPT PASS DIA

CINCLANT AND CINCUSNAVEUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MA (RABETAFIKA, ROLAND)

SUBJECT: ARREST OF COLONEL ROLAND RABETAFIKA

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN DRAMATIC NEW TURN OF POLITICAL EVENTS
COLONEL ROLAND RABETAFIKA, LEADING MALAGASY MILITARY AND
POLITICAL FIGURE, ARRESTED MARCH 28. IN ABSENCE GOMR
PUBLIC STATEMENT OR CHARGES, EMBASSY SUPPOSES THAT
ARREST IS FOR INVESTIGATIVE PURPOSES AT MINIMUM, AND
POSSIBLY FOR GRAVER REASON, IN CONNECTION WITH TRIAL NOW
IN PROGRESS OF THOSE ACCUSED OF RATSIMANDRAVA ASSASSINATION
AND REBELLION. TANANARIVE REMAINS QUIET. END SUMMARY.

1. COLONEL ROLAND RABETAFIKA, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF GOVT
IN RAMANANTSOA GOVERNMENT, LEADING MALAGASY MILITARY
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AND POLITICAL FIGURE, AND BROTHER OF MALAGASY AMBASSADOR

TO UN, ARRESTED MARCH 28. GOMR HAS MADE NO PUBLIC STATEMENT ON ARREST, AND MADAGASCAR MATIN OF APRIL 1 SIMPLY REPORTS THAT HE IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED, ACCORDING UNOFFICIAL BUT GENERALLY RELIABLE SOURCE.

2. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT SPECIFIC CHARGES ARE, BUT, DURING TRIAL OF COLONEL RAJAONARISON AND OTHERS NOW IN PROGRESS, RABETAFIKA'S NAME HAS CROPPED UP ON HEARSAY BASIS IN TESTIMONY AS MEMBER OF "CLUB OF 48" WHICH SAID TO HAVE "FAVORED AND SUPPORTED" DEMANDS OF DISSIDENTS LED BY RAJAONARISON. "CLUB OF 48" IS TERM IN USE FOR 48 LEADING AND WEALTHIEST MERINA FAMILIES, GROUP WHICH INCLUDES RABETAFIKA FAMILY.

3. WE HAVE HEARD FROM SOURCE WHICH SHOULD BE RELIABLE THAT RABETAFIKA SUMMONED MARCH 28 TO COURT WHERE TRIAL TAKING PLACE, INFORMED BY PROCUREUR GENERAL (PUBLIC PROSECUTOR) ROGER ANDRIAMISEZA THAT HE UNDER ARREST, AND HANDCUFFS SNAPPED ON HIM.

4. FONOFF OFFICIAL HAS PRIVATELY CONFIRMED TO EMBASSY NEWS OF ARREST WHICH WE ORIGINALLY RECEIVED FROM PRIVATE SOURCE. SAME OFFICIAL HAS LABELLED IT "SETTLEMENT OF ACCOUNTS" BETWEEN GENDARMERIE AND ARMY.

5. COMMENTS:

(A) WE ASSUME THAT ARREST MUST HAVE APPROVAL OF MILITARY DIRECTORY.

(B) WE WOULD SUPPOSE THAT AT MINIMUM DIRECTORY MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT, SINCE RABETAFIKA'S NAME HAS COME UP IN MANNER INDICATED ABOVE IN TRIAL TESTIMONY, POLITICAL IMPARTIALITY AS BETWEEN MERINA AND COTIERS ARGUED FOR HIS ARREST FOR INVESTIGATIVE PURPOSES SINCE ALL OTHERS UNDER ARREST AND ON TRIAL ARE COTIERS.

(C) SINCE RUMOR HAS PERSISTED THAT UPPER CLASS MERINA WERE BEHIND RATSIMANDRAVA ASSASSINATION BECAUSE OF THEIR CONCERN THAT HIS POLICY FAVORING DEVELOPMENT AT LEVEL OF CONFIDENTIAL

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MASSES WOULD DEPRIVE THEM OF THEIR DOMINANT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POSITION, ARREST OF RABETAFIKA COULD SIGNIFY THAT SUCH REPORT NOW BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY DIRECTORY. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT VICTOR RAMANITRA, WHO BELONGS TO UPPER CLASS MERINA GROUP, WAS REMOVED AS PROCUREUR GENERAL ABOUT BEGINNING MARCH. UPPER CLASS MERINA DISTURBED OF COURSE BY RABETAFIKA ARREST.

(D) SITUATION REMAINS QUIET IN TANANARIVE. GOMR CONTINUES
MOUNT EXTENSIVE AND STRINGENT MILITARY SECURITY APPARATUS
AROUND SCENE OF TRIAL. CURFEW AND INTERDICTION ON PUBLIC
GATHERINGS CONTINUE.
MENDENHALL

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